Transatlantic Radio Telephony[1]

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SYNOPSIS: The first transmission of the human voice across the Atlantic was accomplished by means of radio in 1915. Since that time substantial progress has been made in the art of radio telephony and in January of this year another important step was taken in the accomplishment of trans-oceanic voice communication. At a prearranged time telephonic messages were received in London from New York clearly and with uniform intensity over a period of about two hours.

These talking tests were part of a series of experiments on transatlantic telephony which are now under way, the results of which to date are reported in this paper.

A new method of transmission, radiating only a single side-band, is being employed for the first time. As compared with the ordinary method of transmission, this system possesses the following important advantages:

The effectiveness of transmission is greatly increased because all of the energy radiated is effective in conveying the message; whereas in the ordinary method, most of the energy is not thus effective.

The stability of transmission is improved.

The frequency band required for transmission is reduced, thus conserving wave length space in the ether and also simplifying the transmitting antenna problem.

An important element of the high-power transmitter is the water-cooled tubes, by means of which the power of the transmitted currents is amplified to the order of 100 kilowatts or more. The direct-current power for these tubes is supplied from a 60-cycle, a-c. source through water-cooled rectifier tubes.

A highly selective and stable type of receiving circuit is employed. Methods and apparatus have been developed for measuring the strength of the electromagnetic field which is delivered to the receiving point and for measuring the interference produced by static.

The transmission tests so far have been conducted on a wave length of 5260 meters (57,000 cycles per second). The results of the measurements during the first quarter of the year on the transmission from the United States to England show large diurnal variations in the strength of the received signal and in the radio noise strength, as is to be expected, and correspondingly large diurnal variations in the ratio of the signal to noise strength and in the resulting reception of spoken words. Also, the measurements, although as yet incomplete, show a large seasonal variation.

The character of the diurnal and seasonal variations is clearly indicated in the figures. The curves present the most accurate and complete data of this kind yet obtained.

ON January 15, of this year, a group of about 60 people gathered in London at a prearranged time and listened to messages spoken by officials of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company from their offices at 195 Broadway, New York City. The transmission was conducted through a period of about two hours, and during this time the words were received in London with as much clearness and uniformity as they would be received over an ordinary wire telephone circuit. During a part of the time a loud speaker

[1]This paper, with the exception of the Appendix, was presented at the Annual Convention of the A. I. E. E., Swampscott, Mass., June 26–29, 1923, and was printed in the Journal for August, 1923.

was used in connection with the receiving set, instead of head receivers. The reporters present easily made a transcription of all the remarks, both with head sets and with the loud speaker.

These tests were made possible by cooperation between the engineers of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company and the Western Electric Company, and the engineers of the Radio Corporation of America and its associated companies. The sending apparatus was installed in the station of the Radio Corporation of America, at Rocky Point, L. I., in order to make use of that company's very efficient multiple-tuned antenna. The receiving apparatus was installed in the buildings of the Western Electric Company, Ltd., at New Southgate, England.

This was not the first time speech had been transmitted from America to Europe. Transatlantic telephony was first accomplished in 1915, when the American Telephone and Telegraph Company transmitted from the Navy station at Arlington, Va., to the Eiffel Tower, Paris. In these earlier tests, however, speech was received in Paris only at occasional moments when transmission conditions were exceptionally favorable. The success of the present tests indicates the large amount of development which has been carried out since this first date.

The recent talking tests were carried out as part of an investigation of transatlantic radio telephony. This investigation is directed at determining (1) the effectiveness of new methods and apparatus which have been developed for telephonically modulating and transmitting the large amounts of power necessary for transoceanic operation, (2) the efficacy of improved methods for the reception of this transmission and for so selecting it as to give an extremely sharp differentiation between the range of frequencies transmitted and all the frequencies outside of this range; and (3) determining the transmission characteristics for transatlantic distances and the variation of the characteristics with the time of day and the season of the year, including the measurement of the amount of static interference.

The tests are being continued, particularly as regards the study of transmission efficiency.

Single Side-Band Eliminated Carrier Method of Transmission

The method of transmission used in these experiments is what we know as the single side-band eliminated carrier method[2]. With this

[2]For a more complete exposition of this method see U. S. patent No. 1449382 issued to John R. Carson to whom belongs the credit for having first suggested it. Also see Carson patents Nos. 1,343,306 and 1,343,307.

method, the narrowest possible band of wave lengths in the ether is used, and all of the energy radiated has maximum effectiveness in transmitting the message.

As had been pointed out in other papers[3], when a carrier is modulated by telephone waves, the power given out is distributed over a frequency range, and may be conveniently considered in three parts: (1) energy at the carrier frequency itself, (2) energy distributed in a frequency band extending from the carrier upward, and having a width equal to the frequencies appearing in the telephone waves, and (3) energy in a band extending from the carrier downward, and having a similar width. The power at the carrier frequency itself makes up somewhat more than two-thirds of the total power, even when modulation is as complete as possible. Furthermore, this energy can, in itself, convey no message, as is self evident. In the present method, therefore, the carrier-frequency component is eliminated, by methods explained in detail below with the result that a large saving in power is effected. Each of the remaining frequency ranges, generally known as the upper and the lower side-band respectively, transmits power representing the complete message. It is therefore unnecessary to transmit both of these side-bands, so that in the present method one of them is eliminated. In this way the transmission of the message uses only half the frequency band required in the usual method of operation. Similarly the frequency-band accepted by the receiving set is narrowed to conform to a single side-band as compared with the usual double side-band reception, and as a result the ratio of signal to interference is improved. Certain other advantages of this method will be brought out in the further discussion.

While these advantages of the single side-band eliminated carrier method hold good for radio telephone transmission generally, they become of the utmost importance in transoceanic work, because of the necessity of conserving power in a system where the transmitting powers are large, and also because the very limited frequency range available for long distance transmission makes it imperative that each part of the range shall be utilized with the greatest of care. Before discussing the method further, the circuits and apparatus which are actually used in the tests will be described.

[3]"Carrier Current Telephony and Telegraphy" by Colpitts and Blackwell. Journal A. I. E. E., April, 1921.

"Application to Radio of Wire Transmission Engineering" by Lloyd Espenschied. Proc. Inst. Radio Engrs., Oct. 1922.

"Relations of Carrier and Side-bands in Radio Transmission" by R. V. L. Hartley. Proc. Inst. Radio Engrs., Feb. 1923.

The Transmitting System

The transmitting system is shown in simplified circuit form in Fig. 1. It is illustrated as grouped into three parts: The low-power modulating and amplifying stages, shown below in light lines; the high-power amplifiers, shown in heavy lines above and to the right; and the rectifier which supplies the power amplifier with high-tension direct current, shown in the upper left-hand portion of the diagram.

Referring first to the low-power portion of the system, it will be seen that the voice currents (from either a telephone line or a local microphone) are fed into a balanced type of modulator circuit and are modulated with a carrier current of a frequency of about 33,000 cycles. The operation of the balanced type of modulator in suppressing the unmodulated carrier component is explained in the Colpitts and Blackwell carrier current paper referred to above. The result of this modulating action is to produce in the output circuit of modulator No. 1, modulated current representing the two side-bands, for example, the upper one extending from 33,300 to 36,000 cycles and the lower one from 32,700 down to 30,000 cycles. These components are impressed upon a band filter circuit which selects the lower side-band to the exclusion of the upper one and of any remaining part of the carrier, with the result that only one side-band is impressed upon the input of the second modulator. This second modulator is provided with an oscillator which supplies a carrier current of 88,500 cycles. The result of modulation between the single side-band and this carrier current is to produce a pair of side-bands which are widely separated in frequency, the upper one, representing the sum of the two frequencies, extending from 118,500 to 121,200 cycles and the lower one, representing the difference between the two frequencies, extending from 58,500 down to 55,800 cycles. In this second stage of modulation there is a relatively wide separation between the two-side bands which facilitates the selection at these higher frequencies of one side-band to the exclusion of the other. Another important advantage is that it allows a range of adjustment of the transmitted frequency without changing filters. This is accomplished by varying the frequency of the oscillator in the second step. In the present case, the frequency desired for transmission is that corresponding to the lower side-band of the second modulator. The lower side-band of from 58,500 to 55,800 is therefore selected by means of the filter indicated. This filter excludes not only the other side-band but also any small residual of 90,000-cycle un-

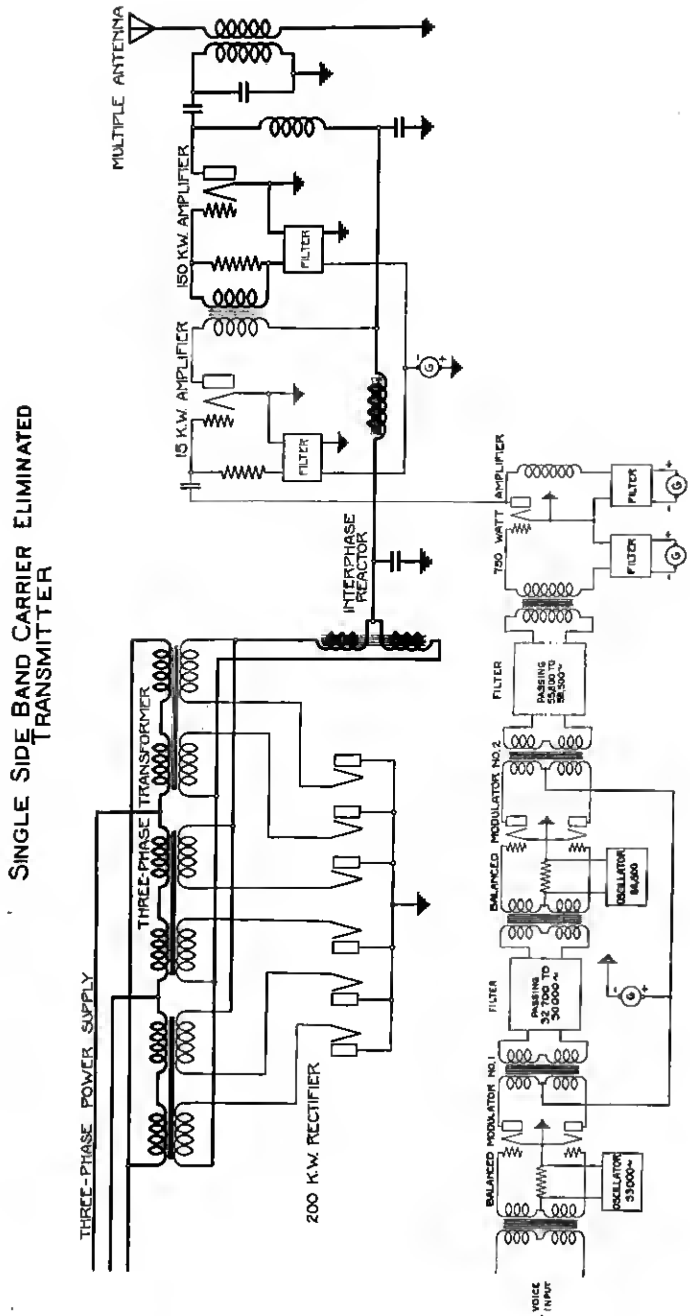

SINGLE SIDE BAND CARRIER ELIMINATED TRANSMITTER
MULTIPLE ANTENNA
150 K.W. AMPLIFIER
15 K.W. AMPLIFIER
FILTER
FILTER
INTERPHASE REACTOR
THREE-PHASE TRANSFORMER
THREE-PHASE POWER SUPPLY
200 K.W. RECTIFIER
750 WATT AMPLIFIER
FILTER
FILTER
FILTER
PASSING 55,400 TO 58,500~
BALANCED MODULATOR NO. 2
OSCILLATOR 84,600
FILTER
PASSING 32,700 TO 30,000~
BALANCED MODULATOR NO. 1
OSCILLATOR 33000~
VOICE INPUT

Fig. 1

modulated carrier current which may get through the second modulator circuit if it is imperfectly balanced.

Having prepared at low power the side-band currents of desired frequency it is necessary to amplify them to the required magnitude for application to the transmitting antenna. This amplification is carried out in three stages. The first stage increases the power to about 750 watts, and is shown in Fig. 1 together with the modulating circuits. This amplifier employs in its last stage three glass vacuum tubes rated at 250 watts each and operating at 1500 volts.

The output of the 750 watt amplifier is applied to the input of the larger-power amplifying system beginning with the 15-kw. amplifier of Fig. 1. This consists of two water-cooled tubes in parallel, operating at approximately 10,000 volts. The output of this amplifier is applied by means of a transformer to the input of the 150-kw. amplifier which consists of two units of ten water-cooled tubes each, all operating in parallel at about 10,000 volts.

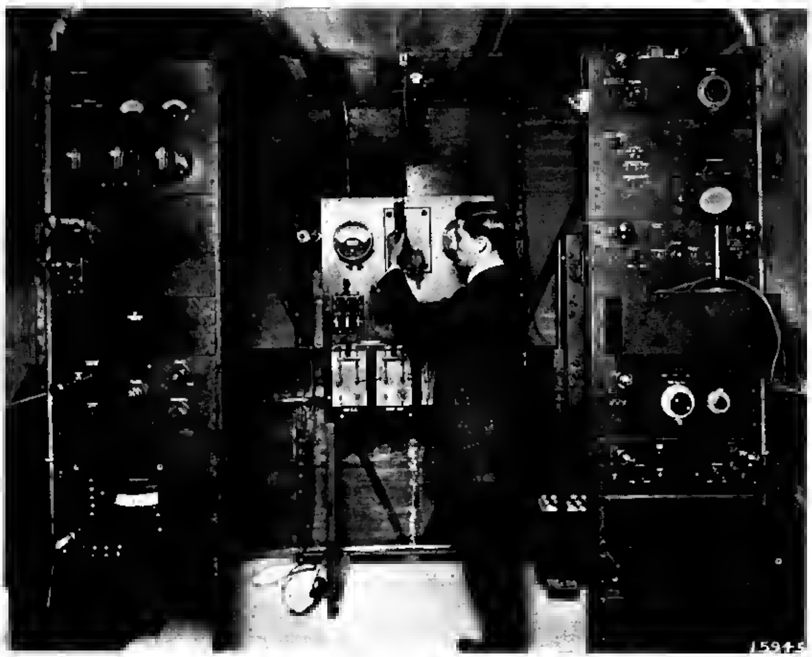


Fig. 2

The high-voltage, d-c. supply is furnished by a large vacuum tube rectifier unit rated at 200 kw. It employs water-cooled tubes similar

to those used in the power amplifiers except that they are of the two-electrode type. The rectifier operates from a 60-cycle, three-phase supply circuit and utilizes both halves of each wave. The two sets of rectified waves are combined by means of an inter-phase reactor which serves to smooth out the resultant current and by distributing the load between tubes of adjacent phases increases the effective load capacity of the rectifier. The ripple is further reduced by the filtering retardation coil and condensers shown.

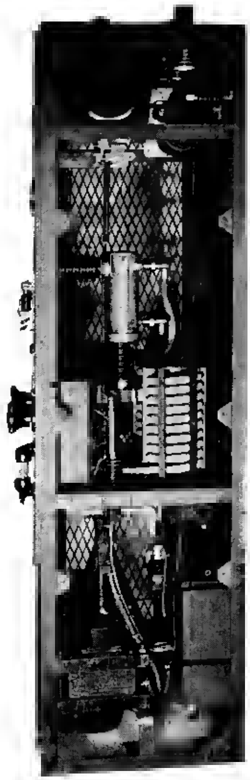


Fig. 3

Reproductions of the apparatus comprising the transmitter system as described above are given in Figs. 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Fig. 2 shows the apparatus comprising the low-power stage of the transmitting system. The right-hand rack contains the two weak-power modulating units and the two single-side-band selecting filters. The left-hand rack is the 750-watt amplifier unit. The three radiation-cooled tubes of 250-watt capacity each will be seen near the top.

Below are the smaller amplifying stages. The power supply board is shown in the center of the photograph.

Fig. 3 is a side view of the 15-kw. amplifier unit. The face of the panel from which the control handles protrude is on the left. Mounted in the cage behind the front panel are two water-jackets for accommodating the water-cooled tubes, also a coiled hose for increasing the electrical resistance of the water supply circuit (the water-cooled anodes of the tubes being operated above ground potential).

The final amplifier of 150-kw. capacity is shown in Fig. 4. It comprises two units each of 75 kw. Each unit contains 10 water cooled tubes which can be seen mounted in their water jackets. To the right of these units is located the 200-kw. rectifier unit shown in Fig. 5. The unit contains actually 12 tubes, there being two tubes

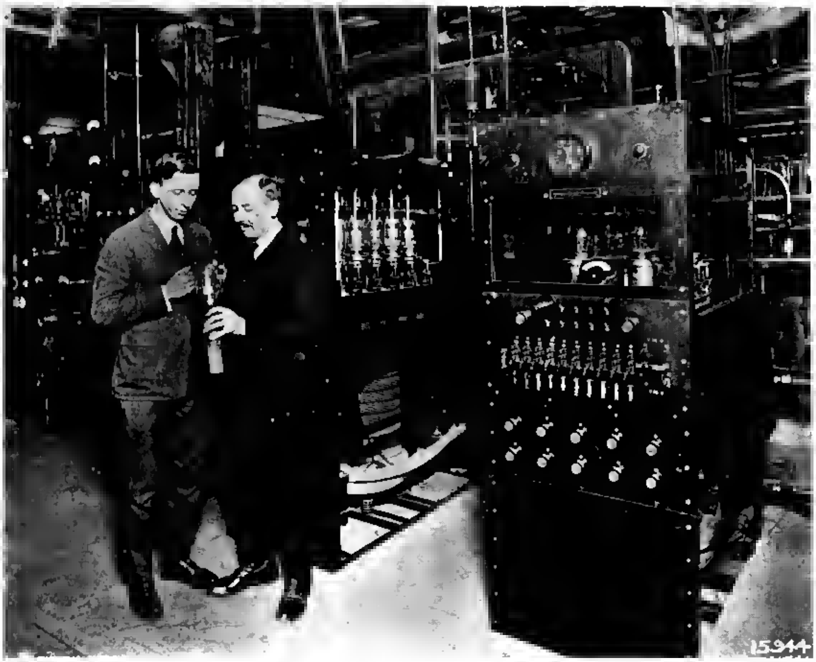


Fig. 4

for each of the six half waves. The pancake coils on the top of the rack are protecting choke coils to guard the transformer secondary winding against steep wave fronts in case of tube failure.

From the above description it will be understood that the transmitting system is one in which the useful side-band is first developed

by modulation and filtration at low power and then its power is built up to a large value in a succession of powerful amplifiers. It

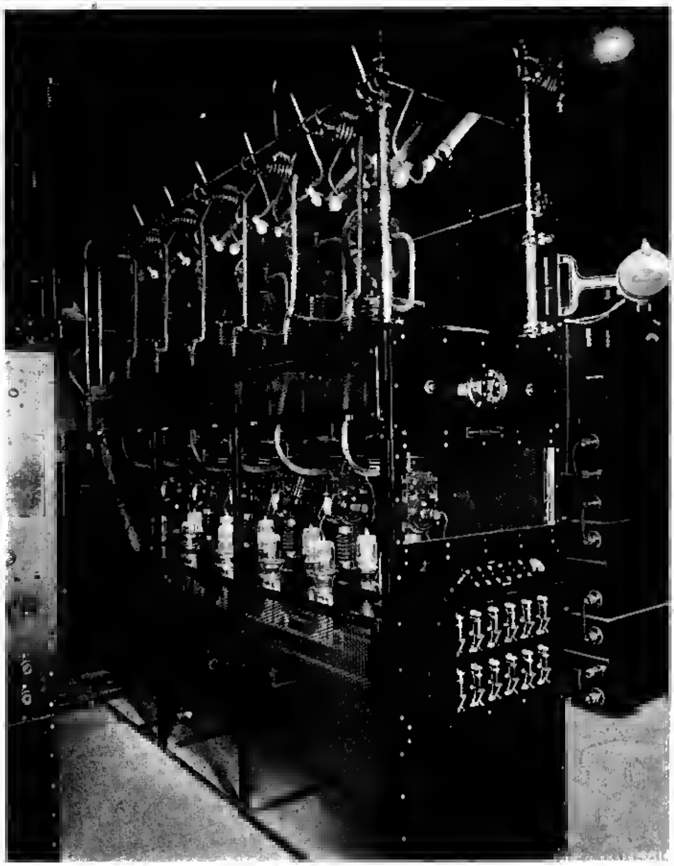


Fig. 5

will be appreciated, therefore, that the large-power amplifiers and in particular the water-cooled tubes which are their essential elements represent one of the major problems of the development.

High-Power Tubes

The development of the high-power tubes is described quite fully in another paper[4]. The present discussion is, therefore, limited to a few of the outstanding features.

[4] *Bell System Technical Journal*, July 1922.

In the design of high-power tubes for use in this system the main problem is to insure the ready disposal of the large amounts of heat generated at the anodes. For the conditions of use in the present type of system where the tube is employed as an amplifier, the power which must be disposed of as heat at the anode is of the same order of magnitude as the power which the tube will deliver to the antenna. In the case of the present equipment, therefore, the tube must be so designed as to operate continuously with a heat dissipation at the anode of more than 10 kw. It is obviously difficult to secure so large a dissipation in a tube enclosed with glass walls, and a tube was therefore designed in which the anode forms a part of the wall of the containing vessel and the heat generated in it is removed by circulating water. The tube used is shown in Fig. 6. The lower cylindrical portion is the anode which is drawn from a sheet of copper. The

Fig. 6

upper portion is of glass and serves both to support and insulate the grid and filament elements.

The three principal difficulties met in the construction of these tubes are the making of a vacuum-tight seal between the copper and the glass, the provision of adequate means for conducting through the glass wall the large currents necessary to heat the filament, and the obtaining of the necessary vacuum for high-power operation.

The first of these problems was solved by the development of a new metal to glass seal. In making this seal the glass and metal parts are brought into contact while hot, the temperature being high enough for the glass to wet the metal. The part of the metal in contact with the glass is made so thin that the stresses which are set up when the seal cools are not great enough to fracture the glass or to break it away from the metal at the surface of contact. Seals made in this way are sufficiently rugged to stand repeated heating and cooling from the temperature of liquid air to that of molten glass without deterioration.

A seal employing the same principle but different in form is also used at the point where the leads carrying the filament current pass through the glass walls of the tube. The lead is made of copper 0.064 in. in diameter and passes through the center of a copper disk, 0.010 in. thick, the joint between the lead and the disk being made vacuum-tight by the use of a high melting solder. The disk is sealed to the end of a glass tube which is in turn sealed into the glass wall of the vacuum tube.

In exhausting the tubes it has been found necessary to subject all the metal parts to a preliminary heat treatment in a vacuum furnace during which the great bulk of the occluded gasses is removed. By this method the time of exhaust can be considerably reduced but the vacuum conditions to be met are so stringent that the final processes of evacuation must be carefully controlled and often occupy as much as twelve hours.

The tubes are operated at a plate voltage of 10,000 volts and are capable of delivering 10 kw. at this voltage in a suitable oscillatory circuit. For this performance an average electron current of 1.35 amperes is required. The total electron current that the filament must be capable of supplying to insure steady operation is about 6 amperes.

When the tubes are used to amplify modulated currents with large peak values such as are characteristic of telephone signals it is essential that the maximum electron current through the tube shall be several times the normal operating current and therefore to insure the necessary high quality of transmission these tubes are operated for telephone purposes with an average output of about 5 kw.

The Receiving System

In the method of transmission ordinarily employed in radio telephony by which the carrier and both side-bands are sent out from the transmitting station and received at the distant end, detection is readily

accomplished merely by permitting all of these components to pass through the detector tube. The detecting action whereby the voice-frequency currents are derived, is accomplished by a remodulation of the carrier with each side-band.

With the present eliminated carrier method of transmission the side-band is unaccompanied by any carrier with which to remodulate in the receiving detector. It is necessary, therefore, to supply the

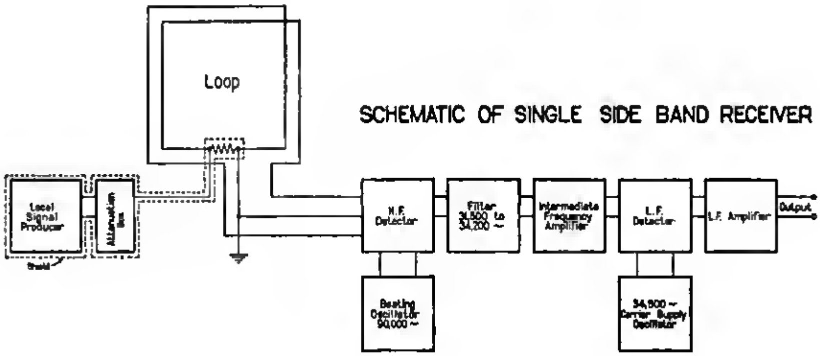


Fig. 7

detector with current of the carrier frequency obtained from a local source. Thus, in the present experiments, if a current of the original carrier frequency, 55,500 cycles, is supplied to the detector it will remodulate or "beat" with the received side-band of, say 55,800 to 58,500 cycles and a difference-frequency band of 300 to 3000 cycles, *i.e.*, the voice frequency band will result.

The arrangement actually used, however, is not quite so simple as this. It is shown schematically in Fig. 7. Reception is carried out in two steps, the received side-band being stepped down to a lower frequency before it is detected. The stepping down action is accomplished by combining in the first detector the incoming band of 55,800 to 58,500 cycles with a locally generated current of about 90,000 cycles. In the output circuit of the detector the difference-frequency band of 34,200 to 31,500 cycles is selected by a band filter and passed through amplifiers and thence to the second detector. This detector is supplied with a carrier of 34,500 cycles which, upon "beating" with the selected band, gives in the output of the detector the original voice-frequency band.

The object of thus stepping down the received frequency is to secure the combination of a high degree of selectivity with flexibility in tuning. The high selectivity is obtained by the use of a band filter.

It is further improved by applying the filter after the frequency is stepped down rather than before. To illustrate this improvement assume that there is present an interfering signal at 60,000 cycles, 1,500 cycles off from the edge of the received telephone band. This is a frequency difference of about 2½ per cent; but after each of these frequencies is subtracted from 90,000 cycles, the difference of 1500 cycles becomes almost 5 per cent. This enables the filter to effect a sharper discrimination against the interfering signal. Furthermore, the filter is not required to be of variable frequency as would be the

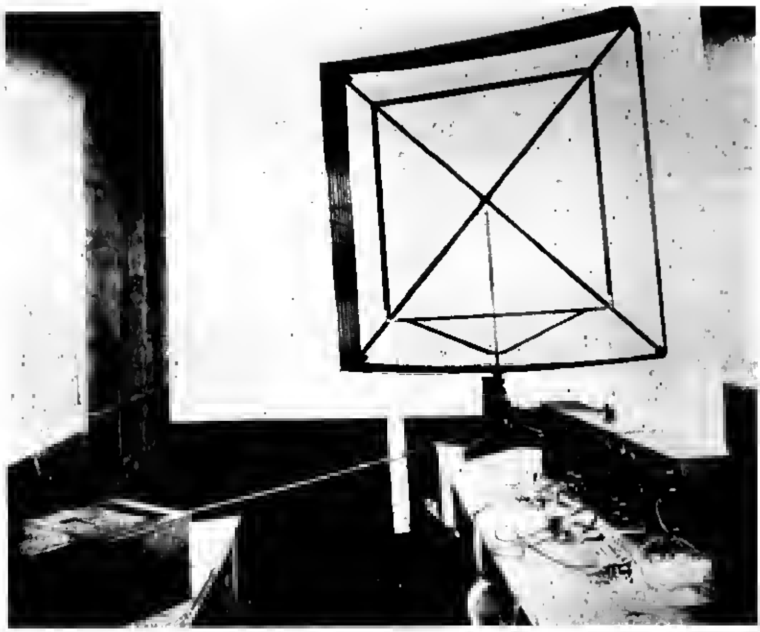


Fig. 8

case were it employed directly at the received frequency since by adjusting the frequency of the beating down oscillator the filter is in effect readily applied anywhere in a wide range of received frequencies. The receiving method, therefore, enables the filter circuit, and indeed also the intermediate frequency amplifiers, to be designed for maximum efficiency at fixed frequency values without sacrificing the frequency flexibility of the receiving set.

A photograph of the receiving set used in the transatlantic measurements is reproduced in Fig. 8. The signals are received on a square

loop six feet on a side and wound with 46 turns of stranded wire. The first box contains the beating oscillator and high-frequency detector, the second box of the filter and amplifying apparatus for the intermediate frequency and the third box the final detector and amplifier. The shielded box at the left of the picture, which is connected to the loop by means of leads in the copper tube, is the apparatus for introducing the comparison signal of known strength into the loop for measuring purposes. This receiving and measuring set is described more in detail in a paper by Bown, Englund, and Friis in the "Proceedings of the Institute of Radio Engineers for April, 1923."

Although it was this very selective and reliable method of intermediate-frequency reception which was used in London, it is quite possible to receive the single-side-band transmission by means of a regular heterodyne receiving set. Even a self-regenerative set will suffice under some conditions. It is necessary, however, to adjust the frequency of the oscillator very carefully to that of the transmitting carrier frequency, otherwise serious distortion of the received speech will result. Also it is, of course, necessary that the tuning be not too sharp if ordinary tuned circuits and not filter circuits are employed. One might expect that some difficulty would be experienced in maintaining the frequency at the receiving end in sufficiently close agreement with the sending frequency. In the tests no particular difficulty was experienced, the oscillators at the two ends being so stable that only an occasional slight readjustment of the receiving oscillator was required. With the development of more stable oscillators, doubtless, the frequency with which readjustments are required, will be further reduced. If serious distortion of the received speech is to be avoided the two frequencies must be within about 50 cycles, an accuracy of 0.1 per cent at 50,000 cycles.

Transmission Advantages of the System

Since the present experiment represents the first use of the single-side-band eliminated carrier type of system some further discussion of the characteristics and advantages of the system is appropriate.

The importance of the system in conserving frequency range will be appreciated when it is realized that the total frequency range available for transatlantic telephony is distinctly limited. Just what the most suitable range is has not been accurately determined but it seems limited to below 60,000 cycles (5000 meters) because of the large attenuation suffered during the daylight hours by frequencies higher than this. On the lower end of the frequency scale, trans-

atlantic telegraphy at present pretty well preempts frequencies below 30,000 cycles (10,000 meters). Therefore, for the present at least transatlantic telephony is limited to a range of some 30,000 cycles. Now transmission of speech requires as a minimum for good quality a single-side-band 3000 cycles wide. Allowing for variations and clearances between channels it is doubtful if the channels could be made to average closer than one every 4000 cycles for single-side-band transmission and one every 7000 cycles for the ordinary double-side-band transmission. This means that even were the whole range from 30,000 to 60,000 cycles devoted to telephony to the exclusion of telegraphy, only about four channels could be obtained by the older methods and some seven by the present one.

It is a rather interesting commentary to note that a somewhat similar situation as to limitation in frequency range exists in the case of carrier-current transmission over wires. The transmission efficiency falls off with increase in frequency and limits the range of frequencies which can be economically used, in much the same way as it is limited in long distance radio transmission. It is because of this limitation in the case of wires and the value which attaches to conserving the frequency range consumed per message that single-side-band transmission was first developed for wire carrier current systems. Its development in wire transmission has been of considerable aid in adapting the method to the present purpose of transatlantic operation.

The second of the outstanding characteristics of the present system resides in the large power economy which it permits. Transatlantic telephony requires hundreds of kilowatts of high-frequency power. Since it is difficult and expensive to produce this power it is important that every effort be made to increase its efficiency or effectiveness in transmitting the voice. To illustrate how the present system effects economies in power, consider the case of a carrier wave completely modulated by a single frequency tone. In such a completely modulated wave, only 1/3 of the total power contains the message, the remaining 2/3 conveying only the carrier frequency which can as well be supplied from an oscillator of small power at the receiving station. It is obvious, therefore, that by eliminating the carrier only 1/3 as much power need be used as would be required were all the elements of the completely modulated wave transmitted. To realize the maximum advantage of this mode of operation, the system eliminates the carrier at low power and, thereby, the high-power apparatus is devoted exclusively to the amplification of the essential part of the signal.

If, after having suppressed the carrier, both side-bands were transmitted, their reception would require perfect synchronism between the carrier resupplied at the receiving end and that eliminated at the sending end, a condition which is practically impossible to meet without transmitting some form of synchronizing channel, which is, indeed, much the same as transmitting the carrier itself. If the receiving carrier is not synchronized, the two side-bands will interfere with each other upon being detected. By eliminating one side-band, this interference is prevented and reception may be carried on, using a locally supplied frequency which is only approximately equal to that of the suppressed carrier. The two may differ by as much as 50 cycles before the quality of the received speech is greatly impaired. The importance to the carrier suppression method of eliminating one side-band will, therefore, be appreciated. The present system eliminates one side-band while still in the low-power stage. While it would be possible to do this selecting after they have both been raised to the full transmitting power, this would require the use of a filter of high-power carrying capacity, which would make the filter very costly and also render the system inflexible to change of wave length. The present system overcomes both of these difficulties by filtering our one side-band at low-power levels and by the use of the double modulation method.

Another very important reason for the transmission of a frequency band as narrow as is possible lies in the difficulty of constructing an antenna to transmit more or less uniformly at these long waves a band of frequencies which is an appreciable fraction of the main carrier frequencies. For example, in the ordinary method of transmission an antenna which was intended to transmit a 30,000-cycle carrier and its two speech side-bands would need to be designed to transmit all the frequencies from 27,000 cycles to 33,000 cycles, a band which is equal to 20 per cent of the carrier frequency. This band is considerably wider than that given by the resonance curve of a highly efficient long wave antenna. To accommodate both side-bands would require flattening out the resonance curve either by damping, which means sacrifice in power efficiency, or by special design of the antenna, possibly throwing it into a series of interacting networks and causing it to become a rather elaborate wave filter. The importance, from the antenna standpoint, of narrowing the frequency band required to be transmitted is, therefore, evident.

It is extremely important that the received signal be affected as little as possible by changes in the transmission efficiency of the medium. The voice frequency currents produced at the receiving

end, after detection, are proportional to the product of the carrier wave and the side-band. If the carrier as well as the side-band is transmitted through the medium, then a given variation in the transmission efficiency of the medium will affect both components and will change the received speech in proportion to the square of the variation, as compared to the first power if only the side-band is transmitted and the carrier is supplied locally. Thus it will be seen that the omission of the carrier from the sending end and the resupplying of it from the constant source at the receiving end gives greater stability of transmission.

Without discussing the system in further detail the advantages of it may be summarized as follows:

1. It conserves the frequency (wave length) band required for radio telephony, which is particularly important at long wave lengths.
2. It conserves power, in that all of the power transmitted is useful signal-producing power. This is particularly important also in long distance transmission which requires the use of large powers.
3. The fact that only a single-band of frequencies is transmitted simplifies the antenna problem at long wave lengths, where the resonance band becomes too narrow to transmit both side-bands.
4. As compared with a system which eliminates the carrier but transmits both side-bands the simple side-band system has the important advantage of not requiring an extreme accuracy of frequency in the carrier which is resupplied at the receiver. Were both side-bands transmitted very perfect synchronism would be required for good quality.
5. It improves the transmission stability of the radio circuit since variations in the ether attenuation affect only one (the side-band) of the two components effective in carrying out the detecting action in the receiver.
6. The receiving part of the overall system has two advantages:

a. It need accept only half of the frequency band which would be required in double side-band transmission, thereby accepting only half of the "static" interfering energy.

b. By stepping down the frequency of the received currents and filtering and amplifying at the low-frequency stage a very sharp cutoff is obtained for frequencies outside of the desired band and a very stable and easily maintained amplifying system is obtained.

Study of Transatlantic Transmission

We come now to a consideration of the second major part of the investigation, namely, that having to do with the transmission of the waves across the Atlantic. It will be evident, from what has been said earlier, that the transmission question is essentially one of how best to deliver, through the variable conditions of the ether to the receiving station, speech-carrying waves sufficiently free from interference to be readily interpretable in the receiving telephone. The transmission efficiency of the medium varies with time of day and year, and is different for different wave lengths. The interference conditions are also influenced by these same factors.

Now we can study this transmission medium in much the same way we would a physical telephone circuit, by putting into it, at the sending end, electromagnetic waves of a known amount of power and measuring the power delivered at the receiving end. The interference at the receiving station likewise may be measured and the ratio of the strength of the signal waves to the interfering waves may be taken as a measure of freedom from interference; this in turn being directly related to the readiness with which the messages are understood. Accordingly, there has been included as an integral part of the investigation of transatlantic radio telephony, the development of suitable methods and apparatus for measuring the strength of the signal waves and of the interfering waves, as they arrive at the receiving station. The apparatus[5] employed in measuring the field strength of the received signals has been outlined above under Receiving System and need not be gone into further. However, a word of explanation about the method which is employed in making the measurement may be helpful. It will be recalled that the specially designed receiving set is provided with a local source of high frequency from which can be originated signals of predetermined strength. A measurement of the field strength of a signal received from the distant transmitter is made by listening first to the distant signal and then to the locally produced signal, shifting back and forth between these signals and adjusting the strength of the local signal until the two are substantially of the same strength. Then, knowing the power delivered by the local source, the power received from the distant station is likewise known. The relation between the power in the input of the radio receiving circuit to the field strength required to deliver that power is known through the geometry of the receiving

[5]It is described in detail in the paper entitled, "Radio Transmission Measurements" by Bown, Englund, and Friis, *Proc. Institute of Radio Engrs.*, April, 1923.

antenna (in this case a loop) and, therefore, the measured power of the signal can be translated directly into the field strength of the received waves.

The measurement tone signal is transmitted from the Rocky Point sending station by substituting for the microphone telephone transmitter a source of weak alternating current of about 1/100 watt at a frequency of approximately 1500 cycles. This tone modulates the radio telephone transmitter in the same way that voice currents would and is radiated from the antenna as a single-frequency wave of 5260 meters (57,000 cycles per second). It, therefore, constitutes a means of sending out a single-frequency continuous wave for measurement purposes. At the receiving end this continuous wave is demodulated to the same tone frequency which it originally had.

For measuring the strength of the received noise, *i.e.*, the radio frequency currents arising from static or other station interference, the method is quite similar. In this case, however, the noise received is so different from that which can be set up artificially in any simple manner that no attempt is made to compare it directly with a local noise standard. Instead the volume of the interfering noise is expressed in terms of its effect in interfering with the audibility of a local tone signal by measuring the local signal which can just be definitely discerned through it. This is a threshold type of measurement which is necessarily difficult to carry out with accuracy. In order to increase the sharpness of definition of the local signal and to make it correspond more closely to speech reception the signal tone is subjected to a continuous frequency fluctuation. The comparison signal has therefore a warbling tone which occupies a frequency band not unlike that of the voice. This method of measuring the interference is discussed in more detail also in the measurement paper referred to above.

Procedure in Making Transmission Measurements. The three quantities which are included in the transmission measurements, namely, the signal strength, the noise strength, and the percentage of words received correctly, are observed one after another in what might termed a unit test period. Although the duration of this test period and the order of making the measurements has been changed somewhat during the course of the experiments, the following program is representative of the conditions under which the data presented below were taken.

A 25-minute test period divided as follows:

5 minutes of tone telegraph identification signals (for receiving adjustment purposes).

10 minutes of disconnected spoken words.

10 minutes of a succession of five-second tone dashes separated by five-second intervals, (for measurement of the received field strength, the intervals between the dashes being used for throwing on the local receiving source and adjusting its strength to equal that of the receive signals by alternately listening to one and then the other).

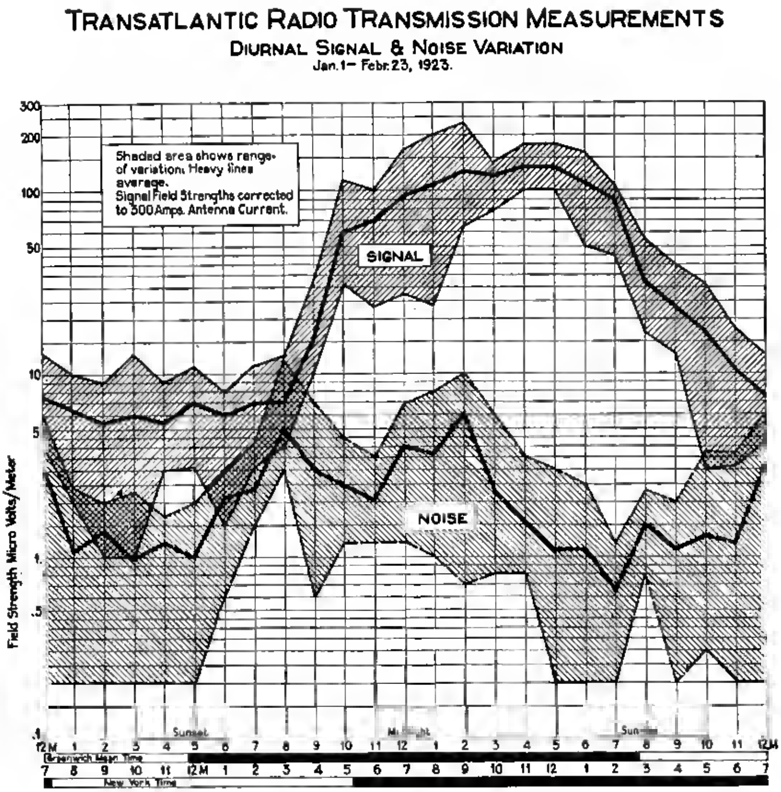


Fig. 9

Immediately following this test period the London observers measured the noise level.

This unit test period was repeated every hour over a period which varied from several hours to as long as two days' duration. Most of the test periods ran for about 28 hours, starting about eleven o'clock Sunday morning and continuing until about three o'clock Monday morning, London time. During this time the telegraph load through

the Rocky Point station of the Radio Corporation was sufficiently light to enable one of the two antennas to be devoted to these experiments. The measurements were started January 1, 1923 and are still in progress.

At the present time (April) the results for the first three months of the tests are available. These results are not yet sufficiently complete nor do they cover a sufficient number of variables in terms

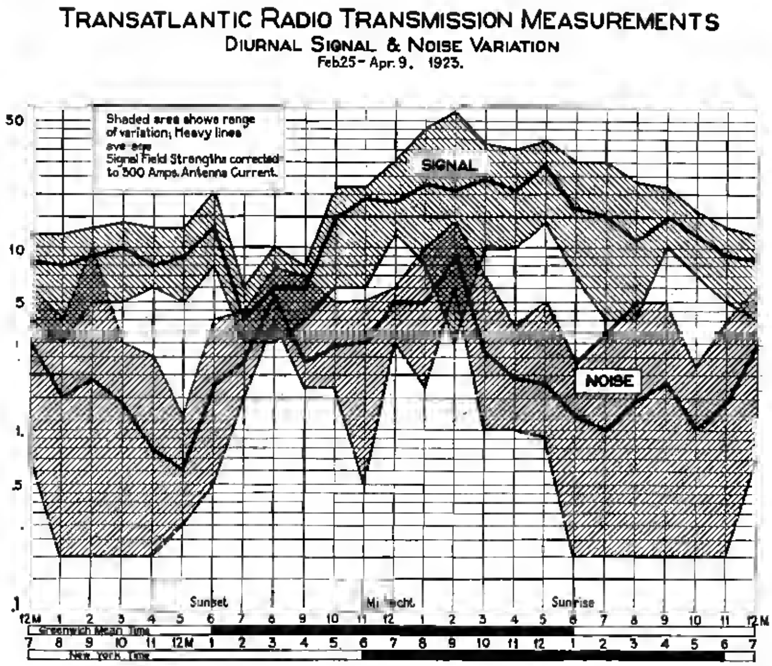


Fig. 10

of time, wave length, etc., to enable any very definite conclusions to be drawn from them. They do illustrate, however, the usefulness of the methods employed, and even in their incomplete state show some factors of considerable interest.

The results of the measurements of received signal, strength and received noise are given in Figs. 9 and 10. The data have been divided and plotted in these two sets of curves because the transmission conditions across the North Atlantic appeared to suffer a rather rapid change about February 23rd. Fig. 9 therefore covers the winter period from January 1 (when the test started) to February 23; and Fig. 10 covers the next period from February 25 to April 9.

The curves are plotted between time of day as abscissas and field strength in microvolts per meter as ordinates. The time during which darkness prevailed at Rocky Point and at London is indicated by the block-fills on the time scales. The overlap of these block-fills indicates the time during which darkness extended over the entire transatlantic path. For Fig. 9 the darkness-belt is as of February 1 and for Fig. 10 as of March 21. The curves show the mean of the results and also the boundaries of the maximum and minimum values observed.

Received Signal Strength. The outstanding factors to be noted concerning the signal strength curves are:

1. The diurnal variations are plainly in evidence. During the first test period covered by Fig. 9, for example, the field strength varied in the ratio of the order of 15 to 1 between day and night conditions, running about 100 microvolts per meter during the night and averaging about 6 microvolts per meter during the day. The diurnal variation is also to be seen in Fig. 10 although the variations between night and day transmission are less marked.

The measured daylight values lend support to the Austin-Cohen absorption coefficient. The average of the observed daylight value for the period of these tests is between 7 and 8 microvolts per meter, while the calculated value is 9.5. Concerning the high field strengths obtaining at night, it should be noted that the maximum observed value of 237 microvolts per meter does not exceed the value of some 340 microvolts which it is estimated should obtain at London were no absorption present in the intervening medium, *i.e.*, were the waves attenuated in accordance with the simple inverse-with-distance law. While no definite conclusions can yet be drawn from these results as to the cause of the diurnal variations, this indication that the upper limit of the variation is the no-absorption condition suggests that the diurnal fluctuations are controlled by the absorption conditions of the medium rather than by reflection or refraction effects.

2. An indication of the seasonal variation which apparently occurs in developing from winter to early spring is found in a comparison of the signal strength curves of Figs. 9 and 10. On the whole the signal strength received in the second test period is considerably less than that received for the first period. This drop in the average of the 24 hours is caused by a large decrease in the night-time transmission efficiency. The daylight transmission does not change much, but what little change there is lies in the direction of an increase as the season advances.

3. A decrease in the transmission efficiency is observed between the time of sundown in London and sundown in New York, that is,

during the period when the sunset condition intervenes in the transmission path. This dip is particularly noticeable in the signal strength curve of Fig. 10. It is not noticeable in Fig. 9, except for the fact that the rise in signal strength corresponding to night conditions in London is delayed until the major part of the transmission path is in darkness.

Strength of Received Noise. The variation in the strength of received noise is shown by the noise curves of Figs. 9 and 10.

1. The diurnal variation of that portion of the noise which is due to atmospheric or "static" disturbances is somewhat obscured by the presence of artificial noise, *i.e.*, noise caused by interference from other stations. The rise in the noise curve at 12 noon is known to be due to artificial interference. In general, however, the large noise values shown to prevail throughout the night in London between about 6 p. m. and 4 a. m. are known to be due to atmospherics. This diurnal variation shows up quite prominently in both figures.

The maximum noise is reached at 2 a. m. London time. Up to this time the night belt extends over London and a sector of the earth considerably to the east and including Europe, Africa and Asia. The noise begins to drop off shortly thereafter and reaches its minimum at sunrise in London. This could be accounted for on the assumption that the major source of the noise lies considerably to the east of London and that transmission of the stray electric waves to London is gradually diminished in efficiency as daylight overtakes the path of transmission.

2. The seasonal variation, as shown by a comparison of the noise curve of Fig. 9 with that of Fig. 10, is not so great as is the case with the transmission efficiency of the signal. However, the noise level is noticeably higher during the second period of the tests, as shown by the average curve of Fig. 10, particularly during the night when the maximum noise obtains.

This indicates that the noise is largely of continental origin lying to the east or south east of London which is in agreement with rough observations made by means of a loop and suggests that the employment of directional antennas would be of considerable advantage. It is expected to include such antennas in the further measurement work.

In connection with these noise curves it should be noted that what they represent is in reality the strength of a local warbling tone-signal, expressed in terms of equivalent field strength in microvolts, which which is just definitely audible through the noise. The actual value of the noise currents, were they measured by an integrating device such as a thermocouple, for example, would be a number of times larger than indicated.

Ratio of Signal to Noise Strength; Words Received. The noise curve of Fig. 9 and that of Fig. 10 can, therefore, be read as "The strength of the signal tone which can just be heard through the noise." It can, therefore, be directly compared with the signal curve itself and the difference between the two curves is a measure of the level of the actual signal strength above that which would just permit of the signals being heard. Actually, the difference between the two curves, as shown in the figures, is proportional to the *ratio* of the signal to the noise strength, because the curves are plotted to a logarithmic scale.

This signal to noise ratio is plotted in Fig. 11 for the test period which corresponds to Fig. 9, and Fig. 12 for the test period which corresponds to Fig. 10. These ratio curves are derived by going back to the original data and taking the ratio for each unit measurement period and spotting it upon the chart as shown by the black points. An average is taken of the points for each hour of the 24-hour period as shown by the circle points. The dash line curves of Figs. 11 and 12, therefore, trace the average diurnal variation of signal to noise ratio.

These curves show:

1. That the signal to noise ratio reaches its minimum during the time when the sunset period intervenes between London and New York.

2. During the night in London the ratio increases more or less continuously and reaches a maximum around the time of sunrise in London.

3. During the course of the daylight period in London the ratio starts out high and drops rather rapidly during the forenoon and assumes a more or less constant intermediate value during the afternoon until sundown. It is during this afternoon period in London that the business hours of the day in London and New York coincide, so that this is the most important period from a telephone communication standpoint.

The drop in the very low ratios obtaining in London in the early evening is due to the fact that an increase in noise occurring at this time is accompanied by a decrease in transmission efficiency from America. This may readily be seen by referring to Fig. 10. The noise increases as the night belt, proceeding westward, envelops England and improves the transmission of atmospherics, which arise possibly in continental Europe, Asia and Africa. As the shadow wall, proceeding westward, intervenes between England and America, the transmission efficiency of the desired signals from America drops and it is not until the night belt extends as far west as America that the transmission efficiency improves sufficiently to overcome the dis-

advantage in London of the large noise values which night there had brought on. Conversely, the high signal to noise ratio, obtaining at about sunrise in London, appears to be due to the fact that as the termination of the night belt, moving westward, intervenes between England and the source of atmospherics to the east, the noise level drops rapidly and has reached low values by the time sunrise arrives in London. At this time, however, darkness still extends to the west

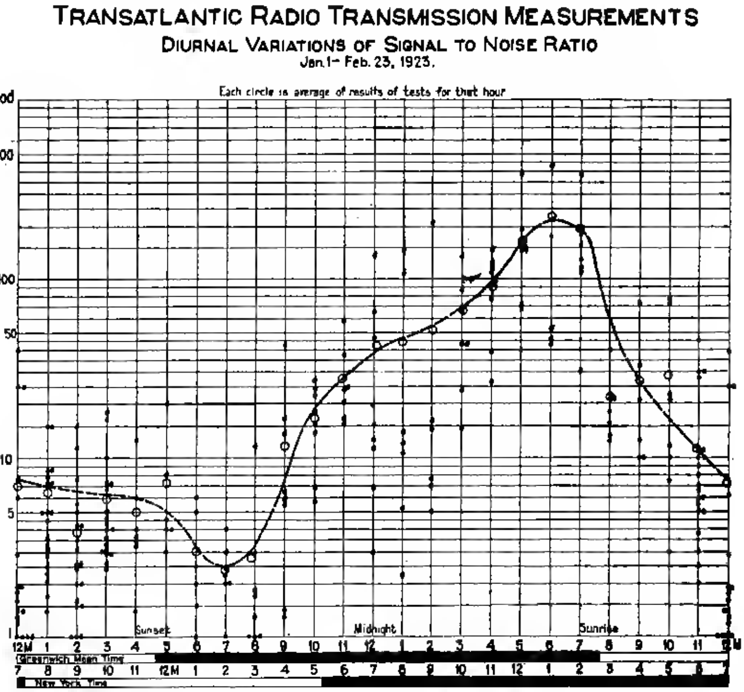


Fig. 11

and the transmission efficiency from America is at its maximum. It is, therefore, due to this interplay between these two factors, signal strength and noise strength, controlled very largely by the transition periods between day and night, that the signal to static ratio varies diurnally in the manner pictured in Figs. 11 and 12.

Concerning seasonal variation, shown by a comparison of Figs. 11 and 12, the following can be said: The dimunition in signal-to-noise ratio in the second test period as compared with the first is caused by the fact that the signal strength has decreased and at the same time the noise has somewhat increased. There is just one other

point that concerns the dip in the ratio occurring at night in London between 12 midnight and 3 a. m. This dip is due to an increase in the noise which occurs around 2 a. m. (A further reduction during this

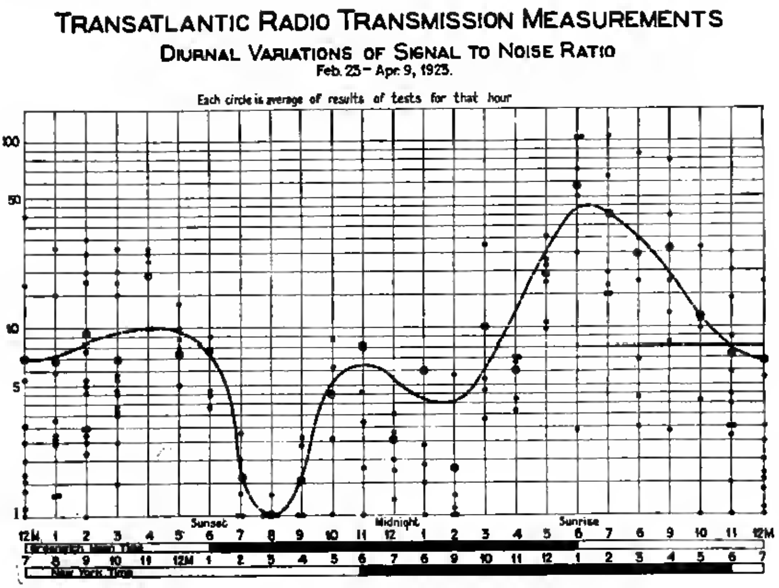


Fig. 12

time, and one which extends the time of minimum ratio from sundown on through the night until 2 a. m. is shown by the April measurements which time has not permitted including in the curves).

During each test period lists of disconnected words were spoken over the systems. As an approximate and easily applied method of indicating the talking efficiency of the circuit, note was made of the percentage of the words which were correctly received.

The curves of Figs. 13 and 14 show the manner in which the percentage of the words which were correctly received varies through the 24 hours. Each point corresponds to the percentage of words correctly received during one unit test period. In many of these tests the interference was noted to be caused by radio telegraph stations, and the data in which the interference is of this character, in so far as identified, are indicated by the triangular dots. It will be seen that most of the poor receptions were due to this cause. Especially is this true of tests at 12 noon at which time severe interference from sources local in London was experienced. The circle points are the

average of results for each hour's tests. The dash line curve is a smoothing out curve of these points.

It is interesting to note that these curves of actual word count conform very well in general shape with those of Figs. 11 and 12 which also really measure receptiveness although in a less direct manner. Reception is best during the late night and early morning,

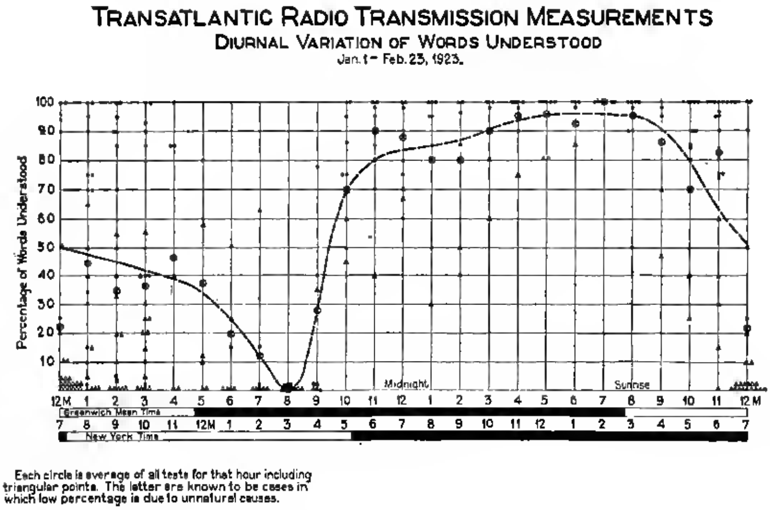


Fig. 13

drops off during the day, reaching a minimum during the evening. Furthermore, the night reception is shown to be considerably better for the January-February period than for the February-March period. The curve of Fig. 14 corresponds quite closely with that of Fig. 12. The curve of Fig. 13 does not show as much of a peak as does that of Fig. 11 which is, of course, due to the fact that above a certain ratio the percentage of words understood is high and cannot rise above 100 per cent.

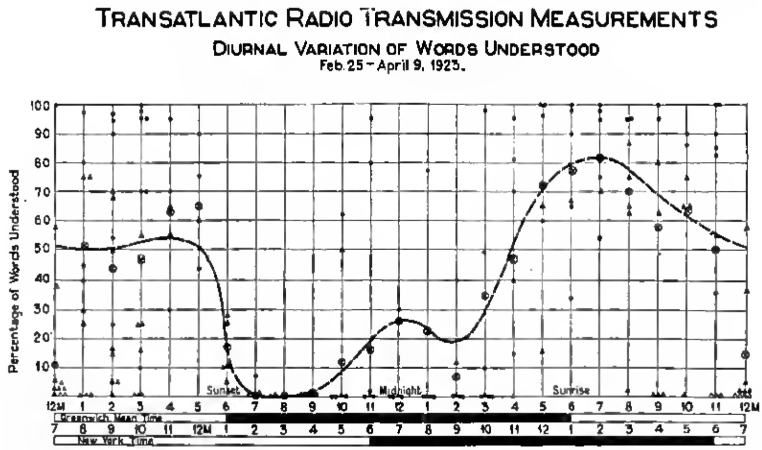
CONCLUSION

As has been indicated this is a report of work which is still in progress. To date:

A new type of radio telephone system affording important advantages for transatlantic telephony has been developed and put into successful experimental operation across the Atlantic.

Sustained one-way telephonic transmission has been obtained across the Atlantic for the first time by means of this system.

The advantages of this system which had been anticipated, particularly, in respect to economies of power and wave lengths, have been realized. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that the high-power water-cooled vacuum tubes which have seen their first prolonged operation in this installation are admirably adapted for use in high-power radio installations and particularly for use as high



Each circle is average of all tests for that hour including triangular points. The latter are known to be cases in which low percentage is due to unnatural causes.

Fig. 14

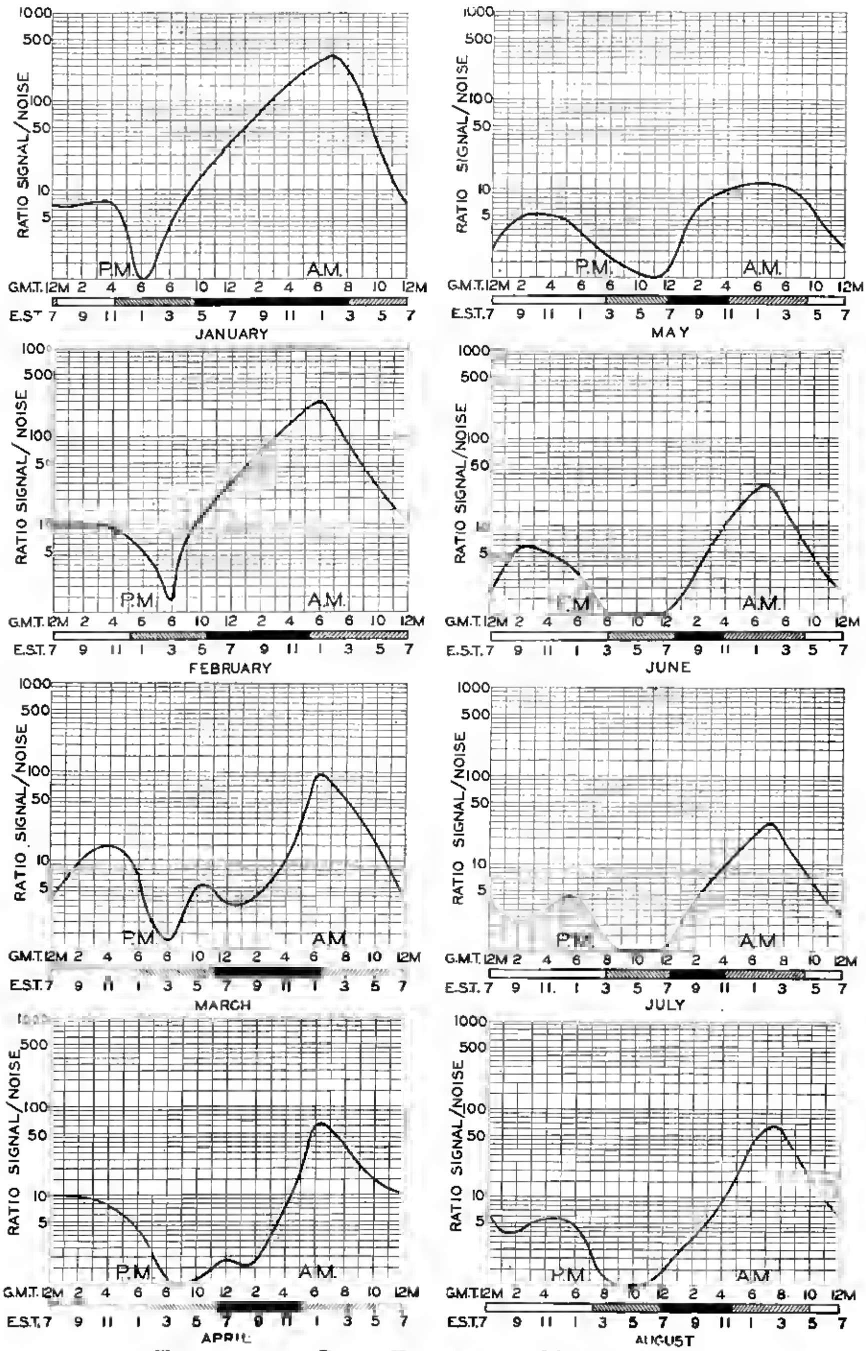
power amplifiers, in the type of system we have described. Also, the method of reception has proved itself to be eminently satisfactory for use with the single side-band type of transmission and to possess important advantages for radio telephony in respect to selectivity and amplification.

Methods have been developed for measuring the strength of the received signals and the strength of the received interfering noise and these methods have been successfully applied in the initiation of a study of the variations to which transatlantic transmission is subject.

The results of the transmission measurements show that, at 5000 meters, the diurnal variations are large, as was to be expected, and give evidences of a large seasonal variation which was, indeed, also to be expected. The results indicate that it will probably be desirable to use a wave length longer than 5000 meters. The measurements are now being made to include the longer wave lengths.

APPENDIX Added September 23, 1923

The results of the transmission measurements from January through August are now available and are summarized in the curves following:



Transatlantic Radio Transmission Measurements
Monthly Averages of Diurnal Variations in Signal to Noise Ratio for 1923. Transmission from Rocky Point to London on 57,000 Cycles (5,260 Meters). Measurements on Loop Reception. Curves Corrected to 300 Amperes Antenna Current